



Revisiting Documentary “*Distance Between Brain and Heart*”

Nithin Kalorth

Amity University, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

The 2012 documentary “*Distance between brain and heart*” is directed by Prathyush Chandra. The documentary focuses on victims of toxic Endosulphan usage in North Kerala. The principal photography of “*Distance between brain and heart*” held at Kasargod, the northern district of Kerala which is most affected dark shades of Endosulphan. The documentary is done under the support and guidance of the School of International Relation of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India. This paper is an attempt to revisit documentary by giving emphasis on topic intensity rather than technical perfection.

Documentary – About Reality

Arneson (2012) compares documentary to photography as a “representational medium”. The raw of real life is the usual tone in any documentary. “Documentary” has been described by Grant et al. as a “filmmaking practice, a cinematic tradition, and mode of audience reception that is continually evolving and is without clear boundaries” (2014). The documentaries always tries to connect the subject with the audience directly. The director of a documentary film uses cues and codes from reality and construct it with the cinematic approach. Aitken (2013) and Rony (2004) discussed the importance of visual images of documentaries and its impact in the real world. Hall in his seminal works repeated the role of a good documentary.

“A good documentary should tell not only what a place or a thing or a person looks like, but it must also tell the audience what it would feel like to be an actual witness to the scene” (Hall, 1997).

Jayasankar and Monterio (2015) in detail, discuss various aspects of Indian independent documentary tradition. Unlike global scenario, Indian documentary was received passive and selective viewership. Most of the documentaries are produced and directed by some social and political causes.

Distance between brain and heart

In *Distance between brain and heart*, the director projects not a life; but the lives of many. We have food to sustain our life. But if you imagine a situation sustainment of that food crop becomes life breaker of a demographic area, will get a better picture of Endosulphan after effects. The documentary focuses on many victims of Endosulphan. Manikandan, Shruthi and Udaya are few of the names and faces which will strike our brain and heart. The government laws are well written which will give answers to our logical brain, but as a human being this documentary will make questions inside our heart which answers are still unwritten.

The documentary is narrated in Malayalam, the regional language by Shaji Yohanan brings out the best result which tease audience emotion to get close with documentary. Apart from principle photography many visuals from feature films and documentary are used o support the script. The shots from Tamil movie Bombay and other shots which show the migration of the village are a few examples.

The documentary discusses issues with Endosulphan’s invention, usage, history and the current usage and effects. The documentary also covers interviews with social workers, journalist, doctors and matter experts. These interviews give an authentic insight into the seriousness of the issue. The field work and research work done by V K Sasikumar is sound on the topic. The team identified the victims and covered the life of them. “Documentary is factional film, which is

dramatic”. (Lorentz, 1986). Here the facts are shown as facts itself. The dramatization is very less because the documentary is just like an open book of the life of victims.

A documentary can be made for knowledge, widening as it is also an eye opener. All methods of recording facts can be used here. Here reality can be interrupted, but only by sincere and justifiable reasons. The documentary opens with the specification of demography. The master shots of train track leading to Kasargod and then bus journey to the inner depth of the district make viewer as he goes with the theme. But the same tempo is not kept throughout the film.

Visual Impact

The overall tone of the documentary is filled with rushes from various other feature films and documentaries. The first half covers the science and historical of Endosulphan in Kerala. For constructing these images director used video shots of books, newspaper cuttings and related transcripts. If the visuals were made with more details out of a book the introduction part will be more interesting.

While talking about talking heads, shots are framed in *out of rule* methods which show reality in the interaction. The profile shots of the victims and the family are shot in natural light (dark shade) which indeed makes the situation emotionally. The all victims have mainly two similarities – they are fighting with both disease and finance. So the visual elements in “*Distance between brain and heart*” framed in a way that economic and social conditions are depicted. As said above the documentary is produced by a social science department, emphasis is given on the intensity of topic. The camera and other technology become a supporting element of the subject. The visual statements of victims are meant for the government and the public who are mainly interested in speaking and discussing on the topic rather than experiencing it. The titles of different kinds are used in documentary for supporting visuals.

While introducing the victims the camera holds for a long (handheld) which provides time for the audience to observe and attain the victim closely. The narration by Shaji Yohanan stands out and makes visual more rich. The close up shots of victims makes question marks on the face of the audience. The camera tried to move around and uses space; even though many of the victims, not even can move with his/her own. The visuals are direct bullets which are shot narrowly to government policies and humanity.

Social Reality in “Distance between Brain and Heart”

Each documentary should be a stimulate desire to know more or explore more. The documentary becomes successful when the celluloid comes closer to the social live reality. Even though we can use wide method of recording on screen which is out of reality, but should never against the reality. The best documentary stands out when it provides answers for the problems raised by such social realities.

The victims covered here are Harshit, Manikandan, Shruthi, Udayan, Sujatha, Kittanna, Suguna, Sohail, Jagadeesa, Narayana, Ashraf, Shahina. These are not only 12 names, but a small number of a big statistic. The Endosulphan is mainly used for plantation crops like cashew nut. The spraying of Endosulphan is done by helicopter which were owned or rented by plantation owners. This started even in the early days. The helicopter was the sign of pride and amusement, then and now?, remains answered as their life. By 2002 government of Kerala banned Ariel spraying (Kerala HC bans endosulfan, *The Hindu*, 2002). This may consider as humanitarian stand, but when we know the ban is not so manual spraying which also makes the effect same.

The documentary satirically knocking on the political interest shown by all government on the Kasargod. Politician and government officers came into limelight as they are obliged to handle the issue. But only the issue still on limelight, not politician nor victims. If former thrown out of rule and later by destiny and life. When the victims are not able to express, their family

members speak for them. The hope of a family, society is speechless. The situation becomes more dangerous before the world when all know this is God's own country. People here, even don't have rights to live in their homeland. In short, this 53 minute documentary speaks for the social justice, which is should be justified by the heart, not the brain. The distance between brain and heart are too far, or it is the time for shortening the distance.

Crew details of Distance between brain and heart

Camera, Screenply, Direction: Prathush Chandran, School of International Relations, Mahatma Gandhi University

Guidance and Support: K.M.Seethi, School of International Relations, Mahatma Gandhi University

Research Field Study: Sasikumar V.K., School of International Relations, Mahatma Gandhi University

Sound Editing and Mixing: Sreejith Karthikeyan, School of Pure and Applied Physics, Mahatma Gandhi University

Narration: Shaji Yohannan

Editor: Benny Kaithram

Associate Editor: Lijo Beegees.

Technical Support: Tony Teddy Fernandez, School of Pure and Applied Physics, Mahatma Gandhi University

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